

Power Relations and Historical Turning Points (Södertörn, 27–28 Apr 25)

Södertörn University, Apr 27–28, 2025

Deadline: Jan 17, 2025

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Power Relations and Historical Turning Points in the Baltic Sea Region: Critical Vocabularies for Understanding Art, Material Culture and Environment.

This symposium aims to revisit the vocabularies for art and craft based material culture, environment, their relationships and hierarchies in the Baltic Sea region, by bringing together scholars in humanities, social sciences, and heritage practitioners. We will look at a longer time span in order to contribute critical articulations for the study of the region, and to bring attention to the hierarchies of power and influence in the region. Even though in recent years, research on shared histories and egalitarian approaches have started to grow taking interest in cultural exchanges, we want to put the spotlight on the inequalities across the region on the national, transnational and regional levels, to examine residues of old power structures, such as Swedish conquests in its age of 'greatness' in the 17th and early 18th centuries, the Russian dominance in the region in the 19th century, the experiences of the world wars and the Cold War in the 20th century.

The symposium aims to examine how the relationships between forms of overseas colonial power and domination have affected the dynamics around the Baltic Sea, and the relative positions of various ethnic groups, including minorities and indigenous peoples, as well as the influence of such forms of administration and control on approaching the environment. What kind of language do we need to articulate and speak about such forms of influence and geographical interrelations? What could we gain from dialogues between different disciplines and perspectives of heritage practitioners? How does the natural environment and the ways of interacting with it affect understanding material culture and vice versa? What kinds of roles have art and visual culture carried in maintaining and resisting the hierarchies?

We encourage contributors to take a long-term perspective on hierarchies of power and influence to articulate the dynamics of relations and relational developments around the Baltic Sea in the past and present, including connections with far-away colonial/imperial powers. We also welcome thematic case studies and translations of critical terms from national languages.

Possible themes include:

- Art and heritage as records of historical and discursive hierarchies;
- Patterns of silencing and neutralizing uncomfortable truths in academia and museums;
- Negotiations of trade and colonial exchange internationally/ locally;
- Practices of collecting heritage under uneven and exploitative relationships;

- Development and circulation of racial hierarchies and ideas of European superiority;
- Movement of ideas, images and artifacts involving colonial and imperial expansion;
- Relationships between environmental history and understanding colonial heritage,
- Raw material-based approaches to trade and exchanges in the Baltic Sea region;
- Materiality of heritage and colonial exchanges;
- Examples of restitution or related debates in the Nordic/Baltic countries;
- Relationship between national identity construction and colonial/imperial projects;
- Critical revisions of the relationships between the different 'Golden Ages' in the Baltic region and internationally;
- Research into missionaries, seafarers and scholars collections and archives.
- Environmental activism of the past and social memory in the context of today's ecological crisis

Key words: heritage, visual culture, environmental history, cultural and economic histories, Baltic Sea region

Please submit an abstract of max 300 words together with a short bio by 17th January 2025. We will get back with answers about all submissions by 5th February.

Send to Baltic Sea Region Vocabularies:
BSRvocabularies@gmail.com

The symposium is organised in the framework of the research network "Connecting Histories. Understanding the Baltic Sea Region through Art and Material Culture" (2024-2025).

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The symposium is held in collaboration between Södertörn University, the Estonian Academy of Arts, University of Gdańsk and the Art Academy of Latvia.

Reference:

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